

First record of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* for St. Helena, South Atlantic

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Première mention du Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* pour l'île de Sainte-Hélène, Atlantique Sud. Le 31 janvier 2015, un Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* a été photographié en vol dans la baie de James, Sainte-Hélène. Il s'agit de la première donnée pour l'île. L'espèce hiverne en grand nombre au large de l'Afrique de l'ouest et du sud-ouest ; l'oiseau est probablement arrivé à Sainte-Hélène grâce aux vents soufflant du sud-est.

On the morning of 31 January 2015, while on board the *RMS St. Helena* anchored in James Bay, St. Helena (15°55'100"S 05°43'250"W), fellow passengers Mike & Sue Morrison were observing Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro* surface-feeding, when they noticed a different bird, which only stayed briefly until the ship started to move out of the bay. It was a small wader with mainly pale grey upperparts, white underparts, a long, white wingbar, a mainly white head with a small darkish eye patch and a shortish, blunt-tipped straight bill (Figs. 1–2). After his voyage, Mike Morrison contacted the Marine Section of the Environmental and Natural Resources Directorate of the St. Helena government.

On inspection of the photographs, the bird was identified as an adult Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in non-breeding plumage (Harrison 1983). Dr M. Bolton and Dr S. Oppel of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK (*in litt.* 2015) confirmed the identification. B. Rowlands (pers. comm.), who maintains the St. Helena bird list, stated that this is the first report from the island.

Red Phalaropes breed near Arctic coasts and migrate almost exclusively via marine routes to winter in large numbers off western and south-western Africa, and western South America (van Gils & Wiersma 1996). Migrants arrive at their non-breeding quarters off south-western Africa from October, with numbers peaking in December, and remain until March, rarely April (Hockey *et al.* 2005). It therefore seems probable that this bird reached St. Helena on the south-east trade winds, which are probably the major factor responsible for the relatively frequent arrival on the island of vagrant wader species typical of the



Figure 1. Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* with Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, James Bay, St. Helena, 31 January 2015 (Mike Morrison)

Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* avec Océanite de Castro *Oceanodroma castro*, baie de James, Sainte-Hélène, 31 janvier 2015 (Mike Morrison)



Figure 2. Red Phalarope / Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius*, James Bay, St. Helena, 31 January 2015 (Mike Morrison)

African–Palearctic flyway (*cf.* Rowlands *et al.* 2004).

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Mike & Sue Morrison for bringing the bird to our attention. Thanks also to Dr Mark Bolton and Dr Steffen Oppel for confirming the identification. Beau Rowlands is thanked for reviewing

an earlier version of the manuscript. Neil McCulloch commented on the submitted draft.

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Received 7 April 2015; revision accepted 27 April 2015.



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